



Jack Norton and Bob & Sue Hostetter enjoyed the sumptuous spread at the February potluck.



Over 40 people were in attendance at the potluck which was held on Sunday, February 16th. Even though both the date and the time were changed, people seemed to get the word and turned out. A large variety of food was brought by guests, ranging from deviled eggs, salads with almost every kind of vegetables imaginable, like chick pea salad, macadamia nuts, home made bread, meatballs stuffed with rice, corn casseroles. Main courses included meatless lasagna, other casseroles and a rice "surprise". Everyone was amazed that there was only one selection for dessert, German chocolate cake, which kind of looked lonesome waiting for people at the end of the line.

After the meal Angelina read the requisite number of announcements and reminders, new volunteers introduced themselves, returning volunteers renewed past acquaintances and met the new people. New volunteers Bob and Sue Hostetter who come from Washington State and Jack Norton, who started his journey to Big Bend in Montreal, Quebec, Canada won prizes for traveling the longest distances to Big Bend (the Hostetters covered some 2300 miles). Ingrid Sampo (short story writer) and Kay White (stamp collector) told of hidden talents not mentioned on their resumes.

CURRENT VOLUNTEERS

PERSIMMON GAP

Mark Kirtley; Interpretation; returning
Joan and Jack Lamkin; Interpretation; returning

RIO GRANDE VILLAGE

Barbara and John Baldwin- Campground Hosts ; returning
Sue and Bob Hostetter- Campground Hosts; new
Denise and John Curd- Interpretation; new
Gail and John Kamaras- Interpretation; returning
Ken Fields and Nancy Dickerson- Backcountry; new

CHISOS BASIN

Dori and Tom Ramsay- Interpretation; returning
Les and Dana Over- Campground Hosts; returning
Kay and Rich Gordon- Campground Hosts; returning

CASTOLON

Whitney Hibbard and Samantha Schroeder- Backcountry and Campground Host; returning
Steve Harper- Backcountry and Campground Host; returning
Nancy Daniel- Interpretation; new;
Norma and Lloyd Burgi- Interpretation; returning
Jack Norton- Backcountry and SCA; new

PANTHER JUNCTION

Kay White- Volunteer Coordinator's Assistant; new
Don Janes- Interpretation (slide collection); new
Ingrid Sampo- Interpretation and ScRM; new
Bernie Sampo- Maintenance; new
Robin Mueller- Interpretation; new; SCA
Allison Taylor- Interpretation; new; SCA
Bob Herendeen- Interpretation; new; SCA
Scarlett and Bob Wirt- Science and Resource Management; returning
Greg Levandoski- Science and Resource Management; returning

Katrina Jensen has fun!





Hosts Dana and Les Over and Rich Gordon soak up the sun in the Basin Campground



KUDOS.... Special kudos and thanks go out to all of the Big Bend National Park staff and rangers for their two weeks of orientation to the park. New volunteers realize how much time and effort went into these activities and they are very appreciative of the commitment made by staff. Starting with the welcome and overview to the park given by Superintendent John King to Ranger Rob Dean's lecture on biodiversity and the variety of wildlife living in the park (Q-how many species of birds are found in the park? A-#450, and Q-how many different types of cacti are found in the park? A- #60) It was easy to get overwhelmed by it all. A common thread running through each of the presentations and demonstrations was a deep respect for the park, a commitment to service, a love of wildlife and nature, and a genuine desire to make the public's visit to the park meaningful.

During each day of the orientation, the Superintendent's wife, Martha King, provided the new trainees with special goodies, fabulous edible morsels, all of which were very scrumptious. We extend a special "thank you" to Martha King and appreciate the gracious token of her hospitality.

Interview with John King, Big Bend National Park's Superintendent

John King began his career with the National Park Service (NPS) as a seasonal employee at the Natchez Trace Parkway during the years he was in college at Mississippi State. He received his Bachelor's Degree in business from there and hoped to secure employment in the transportation industry after graduation. An unfortunate accident to a staff member at the park caused a vacancy and allowed John to assume a full-time position at Natchez Trace. His career took a totally different and unexpected direction. He was allowed the opportunity to participate in an administrative training program with the NPS at the Blue Ridge Parkway and he subsequently worked at Chickmauga and Chattanooga National Military Park, and Isle Royale National Park.

Between 1979 and 1982, Supt. King served for the first time at Big Bend National Park as the Park's administrative officer. During this period his youngest son (now 22) was born and his oldest son (now 28) attended elementary school. After Big Bend, he worked at Colonial National Historic Park and Lake Mead National Recreation Area. He then became Deputy Regional Director for the Intermountain Region, serving in that position for nine years, before going to the Virgin Islands National Park as superintendent. While he was there, he received word that he had the opportunity to return to Big Bend as superintendent, assuming the role in May of 2003.

When asked about Big Bend's future, Supt. King felt optimistic about the Park's need to address

the problems posed by chronic underfunding which has gone on for many years. At last count, it was estimated that this Park was underfunded \$6.8 million dollars annually. This could be spent towards many needed capital improvements and the creation of additional staff positions for the Park which should be filled on an ongoing basis.



Recently, an Executive Director position for the 'Friends of Big Bend National Park' has been created through outside funding to build relationships and to 'friend/fund' raise resources for the park. Dealing with the air and water quality issues has also been a continuing problem and a source for many studies conducted in recent years. Both of these problems are controversial issues and need ongoing support by Federal and State legislators, outside experts and environmental organizations. Often, severe resource dilemmas and demands are in play, which need cost containment strategies, a clear understanding of who the park's constituents are, and firm leadership and direction provided by the Park's Superintendent and its political allies and friends.

Finally, Supt. King wanted to express his sincere appreciation to all the volunteers in the park. Last year volunteers at Big Bend contributed over 36,000 hours of service which was equivalent to the work of 17-18 paid staff members. He felt that the Big Bend volunteer and staff orientation and training program was "one of the best in the country". So KUDOS (again!!) to all concerned for the development and continuation of this very beneficial program.





Interview with Ingrid Sampo, Short Story Writer

Ingrid is one of the newest volunteers who has had two short stories accepted for publication in the last couple of years. Ingrid and her husband, Bernie, began working in February

2004. She has been working as a grant writer for Science and Resource Management, a librarian in the Interpretive Library, a facilitator of the Junior Ranger Program, and a recorder/transcriber with the Oral History Program. Bernie has been working as a mechanic for the Maintenance Department.

The Sampsons are from Minnesota and live in Rosemount, a suburb of Minneapolis-St. Paul. In her professional career Ingrid has done a great deal of non-fiction writing in the form of writing grant proposals, speeches, reports, and related materials. She has always wanted to write fiction, and about four or five years ago, she took some fiction writing classes from the Loft, a literary center affiliated with the University of Minnesota. The classes were very inspiring to her. It gave her the opportunity to be mentored by experienced writers and professionals, to have her writing critiqued, to practice a variety of different styles of writing, and to share and bounce her ideas off others.

Ingrid states that she has been fortunate in having some very inspirational teachers who stimulated her imagination. Her father was very creative and often told her "wonderful bedtime stories" as a child, weaving together one story with another. She tries to write a bit every day. Lately she has been working on a novella and she has

done small pieces of it daily. Her published works include two short stories printed in the last couple of years for *Lakes Alive Magazine*, a Minneapolis-based writers' magazine. One story, entitled "The Long-Fingered Woman" was about a grief-stricken kleptomaniac. The other story, "The Incident at the Tom Thumb" was about a lonely, isolated person living with things out of perspective. Both stories were written in a light-hearted spirit and are a bit "quirky" with surprise endings.

The people that she has written about are a composite of people whom she has known and all involve stories with "very human situations." She feels fortunate to have both of these stories published and feels good about her "publishing track record". (The national average is about 25% or one in four stories submitted are published) She is always looking for new ideas, unusual people and situations that she can share with her readers.



She feels fortunate to have the "peace and quiet" while she is here at Big Bend and to have the time and opportunity to pursue her creative writing dreams. We'll look for one of Ingrid's stories in a national publication in the future and

maybe it will be set in a place that is near and dear to all of our hearts, Big Bend National Park.

Field Trip to Study Butte, Lunch and a Stop at The Terlingua Ghost Town:

Your curious reporter left the park during the middle of the week to have an out-of-park experience with lunch. I headed west from the park headquarters at Panther Junction, and in approximately 24 miles I was in the town of Study Butte. This is the first town that offers gasoline, eating establishments, snacks, lottery tickets, liquor, motels and a convenience store, just two miles outside the western park boundary. I went no further than the first "sit down" eating establishment and stopped for lunch at Ms. Tracy's Café. The "specials of the day" were chicken fettuccine and seafood quiche. However, neither of these appealed to me, so I ordered your basic ground beef tacos (complete with rice and beans). Nearly everyone else around me was having one of the "specials", which looked appetizing. Outdoor and indoor seating were available and the décor of the restaurant on the inside was eclectic. If you eat here, I recommend that you have one of the "specials" of the day.



Just four miles west on Ranch Road 170 from Study Butte, Terlingua (pronounced Tur-LING-guuh) is called a "ghost town" although it really isn't anymore. It houses the Terlingua Trading Company (which sells the typical tourist fare including miniature fake rattlesnakes and horned toads of all sizes which look terribly realistic), every manner of T-shirt possible, Mexican glassware and books galore (cookbooks, geology, nature, travel, books of regional interest, etc.) There is also an art gallery, the Starlight Theatre (which houses a bar and a restaurant, open Thursday through Sunday evenings) and several other eating establishments along the road between the two towns (La Kiva, The Phoenix Café and The Boathouse.)

The heart of Terlingua starts with the ancient rocky cemetery which bears old wooden crosses and small mausoleums, most of them marking the graves of the Mexican workers who died in the mines and in the town within the last 100 years. Mercury was mined in Terlingua until the end of World War II when the bottom dropped out of the quicksilver (mercury) market. According to *Road Guide to Paved and Improved Dirt Roads of Big Bend National Park* (Paragon Press; 1999; p. 23) "The Terlingua Mining District, composed of about thirty mines, produced more than 100,000 flasks of mercury between 1900-1940" and the town during its heyday had as many as 1500 residents in it. The land between these two towns bears witness to the mining business that consumed it and re-contoured it during the last century leading one to ask the question "Will it ever recover" in the form that exists now? One is very dubious that it will.

Returning to route 118 in Study Butte and turning left, you find the road to Alpine which seems to go on for mile after mile (actually some 60 miles or so). There is no short cut, so be prepared to travel a long way before you get to town and hope that you don't have any automotive breakdowns or flat tires along the way.

If you plan to visit either or these two towns, it is recommended that you do it towards the end of the week as that is when the eating establishments are more likely to be open. When in doubt, call ahead and the phone numbers should be listed in the Big Bend Telephone Directory.



INTERVIEW WITH DORI
AND TOM RAMSAY
"SEASONED 'pros' AS
VOLUNTEERS"

In four years of working as VIP's at Big Bend National Park, both Dori and Tom have earned their 2,000 hours volunteer badges. They average 500 hours each, at the Basin Visitor Center, generally working during the winter months of January - March. Last winter, however, they were unable to volunteer, because Tom's recuperation from double knee surgery took a little longer than expected. So, they signed up for last summer's season at the Basin. This allowed them to see the park when the cacti were in bloom and they could experience first hand the impact of summer thunderstorms on the desert's ecology. They also appreciated the calmer pace of life in the park as there are fewer visitors here in the summer.

Tom's favorite place in the park is the Chimney's Trail and Dori's is the North Rim of the Chisos Mountains because of the sheer and sudden drop off between the mountain and the desert. Her choice for a close second would be the Lost Mine Trail because every time she walks it, she sees something different.

Tom's advice to new volunteers is that they get out and see/enjoy the park. He is currently researching a topic and hoping to prepare a talk on the legacy of the CCC and their contributions to the nation's and the parks' history. Many of the great lodges in the National Parks were built by the CCC in the 1930's and are still in existence today (e.g. the Ahwahnee at

Yosemite, Crater Lake, Oregon Caves Lodge, Olympic National Park, Kettle Falls Lodge and the Grand Canyon Lodge).

His biggest thrill thus far at Big Bend was experiencing a thunderstorm while he was outside and listening to the thunder dance

along the canyon walls as the storm passed through the park. Dori's was seeing a great horned owl and watching it try to mimick her own behavior as she observed it for a long time. She also said that watching summer storms come across the desert then having them veer off as they hit the mountains was a truly wonderful experience.

Both Tom and Dori feel extremely fortunate that they get to live at least part of every year in this beautiful and special place. Last summer they enjoyed seeing grandfathers and fathers share the joy of knowing and loving this place to present and future

generations of their children. For the Ramsays, seeing these families' scrap books of photos being shared with campers of the future was like looking into a time capsule that captured special memories for each family and watching "living history" being recorded right in front of their eyes.



We apologize for the tardiness of this newsletter due to many computer problems.

Volunteer Notes

- ♦ Important Notice: Once you submit your paperwork for reimbursements, please wait 2-3 days and then see Terry Boren in Administration M-F, 8-5 to sign for your check.
- ♦ If you're planning to return next year, please remember to bring your VIP sun hat with you!
- ♦ Be sure to check out the VIP newsletter on our website: www.nps.gov/bibie/vip.htm

Editor's Requests

For those of you with digital cameras, we are requesting that you submit any pictures that you took during orientation or during the time you have been at the park this winter for printing in the next newsletter. To submit them, please email Angelina_Yost@nps.gov or provide them on a disk.

The newsletter editor is trying to compile an article and/or accumulated thoughts on the group's "fond memories of national parks." If you have a special spot in a national park or a special recollection that you would like to share with the readers of this newsletter, please submit it to Kay White at the Park Headquarters or email Angelina.

HEARTBEAT ... the editor's final request— We would like to have another regular newsletter column called "Heartbeat" which focuses on special events that happen with regularity to you, the reader. Events such as birthdays, special celebrations, wedding anniversaries, retirements, birth announcements and the like are requested. If you have a special event or date that you would like included in the next newsletter in the "Heartbeat" column, please let us know and we will try our best to do so. Thank you very much!